

Message Text

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, HA

SUBJECT: STUDENTS DETAINED IN HAITI; TROUBLES IN THE GOH

REF: (A) P-AU-P 878; (B) P-AU-P 834; (C) P-AU-P A-42

1. SUMMARY. SEVERAL DOZEN STUDENTS WERE REPORTEDLY DETAINED LAST WEEK AND ARE UNDER INTERROGATION ON SECURITY GROUNDS. WITHIN THE REGIME, INTERIOR MINISTER PAUL BLANCHET APPEARS TO BE ON THE LOSING END OF A CONFLICT WITH TWO OTHER KEY FIGURES. THESE DEVELOPMENTS, TOGETHER WITH ABORTIVE EFFORT OF HAITIAN EXILES TO SEND PACKAGE BOMBS TO GOVERNMENT FIGURES AND A MYSTERIOUS FIRE IN A GOVERNMENT BUILDING NEAR THE PALACE, HAVE SERVED TO GIVE GOH MILD CASE OF JITTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. A HIGH-LEVEL, USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE IN GOH TOLD EMBOFF MAY 14. THAT SEVERAL DOZEN OR MORE STUDENTS WERE DETAINED BY SECURITY AUTHORITIES LAST WEEK IN HAITI FOR "POLITICAL" ACTIVITIES. SOURCE DID NOT KNOW WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THE DETAINED STUDENTS MAY HAVE ENGAGED IN NOR HOW LONG THEY WOULD BE HELD. HE SAID MOST SEEMED TO BE FROM "BOURGEOIS" (I.E. WELL-TO-DO) FAMILIES IN PETIONVILLE. SOURCE SPECULATED THAT LATES ACTIONS SEEMED TO BE OUTGROWTH OF SOMEWHAT INCREASED POLITICAL INTEREST AND FERMENT AMONG A NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HAITI IN RECENT MONTHS, STIMULATED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S EASING OF POLITICAL

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CONTROLS AND BY INTEREST IN MAJOR POLITICAL CHANGES TAKING

PLACE IN PORTUGAL, FRANCE, AND OTHER COUNTRIES--ALL WELL-REPORTED IN THE HAITIAN PRESS.

3. SOURCE ALSO REPORTED THAT THE GOH HAS BEEN TROUBLED INTERNALLY DURING THE PAST TWO WEEKS BY CONFLICT AMOUNTING TO A "POLITICAL CRISIS" BETWEEN INTERIOR MINISTER PAUL BLANCHEOT ON THE ONE HAND AND SECRET POLICE CHIEF LUC DESIR AND REGIE DU TABAC DIRECTOR HENRY SICLAIT ON THE OTHER. (INTERIOR MINISTER BLANCHET'S HOSTILITY TO SICLAIT AND DESIR HAS BEEN REPORTED BY THE EMBASSY PREVIOUSLY--REF C--AND WAS RECENTLY CONFIRMED BY BLANCHET'S BROTHER, JULES BLANCHET, IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFFS MAY 7.) SOURCE REPORTED THAT EFFORTS TO UNDERCUT SICLAIT AND DESIR, WHO WERE STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY MADAME SIMONE O. DUVALIER, APPARENTLY CULMINATED IN A PRESIDENTIAL DECISION LAST WEEK ADVERSE TO THE INTERIOR MINISTER. AS A RESULT THE POSITIONS OF SICLAIT AND DESIR HAD NOTICEABLY STRENGTHENED, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, WHILE BLANCHET'S INFLUENCE HAD SLIPPED. IN THE PAST FEW DAYS RUMORS HAVE BEEN COMMON IN THE GOVERNMENT THAT BLANCHET, HAVING LOST IN A "POWER STRUGGLE" IS ABOUT TO BE DISMISSED, BUT SOURCE THOUGHT THIS UNLIKELY.

4. SOURCE ADDED THAT CONFLICT BETWEEN BLANCHET AND SICLAIT/ DESIR AND DISCOVERY OF SUBVERSIVE STUDENT ACTIVITY, COMING ON TOP OF BOMB EXPLOSION IN PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS CARGO WAREHOUSE AT THE AIRPORT MAY 7 (REF B), AND SEVERAL OTHER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS GOH PERCEIVES AS ADVERSE, SUCH AS THE DEATH OF FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU (SEEN HERE AS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR NEW FRENCH AID PROGRAM TO HAITI), HAVE ALL COMBINED RECENTLY TO TAKE THE EDGE OFF PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER'S POSITIVE ATTITUDE OF A MONTH OR TWO AGO AND MAKE HIM SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE.

5. COMMENT: THE GOH'S DETENTION OF A NUMBER OF STUDENTS LAST WEEK, CONFIRMED BY OTHER SOURCES MAY 13 AND 14, IS THE FIRST SUCH INCIDENT SINCE JEAN-CLAUDE DUVALIER'S ACCESSION. GIVEN THE MARKED EASING OF POLITICAL CONTROLS IN HAITI THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE LACK OF A DECISIVE NEW PRESIDENTIAL STYLE, AND THE CONTINUED ANOMALIES IN HAITIAN SOCIETY, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT SOME OF THE OVER-EDUCATED RELATIVELY AFFLUENT PORT-AU-PRINCE YOUNGER GENERATION MIGHT EXHIBIT DANGEROUS THOUGHTS. ACCORDING TO ANOTHER

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WELL-PLACED SOURCE, QUOTING THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF, ONE OF INDIVIDUALS DETAINED HAD BEEN SOUGHT SINCE 1968 AND WAS FOUND IN POSSESSION OF A PRINTING PRESS AND QUANTITY OF ANTI-REGIME TRACTS, SOME OF WHICH HAD BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN PETIONVILLE. (WE ARE SEEKING TO OBTAIN COPIES OF TRACTS.)

6. ANOTHER FACTOR NOT CITED BY SOURCE WHICH HAS HEIGHTENED REGIME'S APPREHENSIONS IS FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN WHICH SEVERELY

DAMAGED THE NATIONAL INSURANCE OFFICE IN DOWNTOWN PORT-AU-PRINCE NOT FAR FROM THE NATIONAL PALACE MAY 13. ONE HIGH-LEVEL SOURCE ATTRIBUTES FIRE TO SABOTAGE, AND EVEN IF THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE FOR THIS MANY WILL ASSUME IT AS FACT. INTERIOR MINISTER BLANCEHT WAS INFURIATED BY UPI STORY PLAYING UP "OFFICIAL SECRECY" ALLEGEDLY SHROUDING THIS AND LAST YEAR'S PALACE FIRES, AND ON MAY 16 THREATENED OFFENDING REPORTER WITH EXPULSION UNLESS CORRECTION WERE MADE IMMEDIATELY.

8. IN SUM, EVENTS OF RECENT WEEKS SEEM TO HAVE GIVEN PRESIDENT DUVALIER AND THE GOH A MILD CASE OF THE JITTERS. ISHAM

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